

Mango

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A beautiful plant with a delicious fruit. It is slow from seed but fairly easy to grow.

Mangos are a really exotic plant, and they are easy to grow. Mangos come from very hot countries such as Egypt and India where they grow into large trees with masses of dark-green leaves. Grown in pots in this country, they remain quite small and make good houseplants. Unfortunately, unless you have a warm conservatory or greenhouse, they are unlikely to produce fruit. But they are still worth growing because they look so good.

How to grow a mango

In the middle of the mango fruit is a very large stone, the seed, which you will have to remove with a knife. This can be tricky because the stone is very slippery - so be careful not to cut yourself. To get rid of the slipperiness, wash the seed in warm water and dry it on clean tissue paper.

Seeds will only grow once water has soaked through their thick skins to the middle. If a seed has a thick coat, it takes longer for the water to get inside and for the seed to start growing. Mango stones are so hard that we must help the water get inside before they will grow. Using a very ripe fruit helps it get started.

Rub the mango stone lightly with sandpaper. Fill a jar or bowl with water and drop the stone into it. Put the jar or bowl in a warm place and soak the stone for two weeks. Change the water every day so it doesn't go smelly. If you notice your stone sprouting, take it out of the water and pot it up, otherwise pot it up at the end of the two weeks.

Your pot will need to be about 10cm across. Make sure there are holes in the pot to let the water drain out. Fill your pot with multi-purpose compost and water it very well.

Plant the stone about 3cm deep in the compost and water it again. Put it in a see-through plastic food bag and tie the ends up to keep all the moisture in and stop the stone from drying out. Put the pot in a warm place; an airing cupboard is ideal.

The stone will take several weeks before it grows, so you must check it every day. If the compost looks dry at any time, give it a little water. As soon as you see any signs of growth, remove the plastic bag, take the pot from its warm place and grow the seedling on a sunny windowsill.

Mangos grow fairly quickly and will need a bigger pot frequently, especially during the first year. You can tell when it needs repotting because you will see roots growing out of the holes in the bottom of the pot.

Caring for your mango

Mangos require a warm, sunny windowsill or conservatory, the warmer the better. To make the plant bushy, nip off the growing tips occasionally. This will also keep the plant smaller. Water regularly in the summer and feed it every two weeks with a general house-plant food. If your plant gets too large, you can cut it back a little in the autumn.

